

South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin Assessment and Total Maximum Daily Loads



**Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

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Subbasin Assessment
and
Total Maximum Daily Loads**

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Table of Contents

South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin Watershed Advisory Group	i
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures	xi
List of Appendices.....	xvii
Abbreviations, Acronyms and Symbols	xix
Executive Summary	xxiii
1. Subbasin Assessment – Watershed Characterization	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
Background	1
Idaho and Tribal Roles.....	2
1.2 Physical and Biological Characteristics.....	3
Subbasin Characteristics	9
Subwatershed Characteristics.....	17
Stream Characteristics	23
1.3 Cultural Characteristics	30
Land Ownership.....	30
Nez Perce Tribe Treaty Rights	31
Communities	32
History and Economics	33
Land Use.....	34
2. Subbasin Assessment-Water Quality Concerns and Water Quality Status.	39
2.1 Water Quality Limited Segments Occurring in the SF CWR Subbasin	39
2.2 Applicable Water Quality Standards.....	41
Beneficial Uses	41
Water Quality Criteria	42
2.3 Summary and Analysis of Existing Water Quality Data	45
Subbasin-wide Biological and Other Data	45
Subbasin Flow Characteristics.....	52
Subbasin-wide Water Column Data.....	58
Conclusions from the Water Column Data for the SF CWR Subbasin.	72

Summary and Analysis of Existing Water Quality Data for Threemile Creek and Butcher Creek.....	73
Summary and Analysis of Existing Water Quality Data for Lucas Lake	93
2.4 Data Gaps	93
Flow	93
Water Column Data	93
Temperature.....	94
Biological and Other	95
Beneficial Uses	95
3. Subbasin Assessment – Pollutant Source Inventory.....	97
3.1 Sources of Pollutants of Concern	97
Point Sources	97
Nonpoint Sources	106
3.2 Data Gaps	124
Point Sources	124
Nonpoint Sources.....	124
4. Subbasin Assessment – Summary of Past and Present Pollution Control Efforts.....	129
4.1 Point Source Control Efforts	129
Wastewater Treatment Facilities	129
Suction Dredge Mining	132
4.2 Nonpoint Source Control Efforts.....	133
Agriculture	134
Forestry	134
4.3 Watershed Improvement Projects	135
5. Total Maximum Daily Loads	143
5.1 Bacteria TMDL – Threemile Creek	144
Design Conditions.....	144
Target Selection	145
Monitoring Points.....	145
Load Capacity.....	145
Estimates of Existing <i>E. coli</i> Loads	146
Load and Wasteload Allocations	148
Margin of Safety	148
Seasonal Variation/Critical Conditions.....	148
Background	148
Reserve	151
5.2 Nutrient TMDL – Threemile Creek	151
Design Conditions.....	152
Target Selection	152
Monitoring Points.....	154
Load Capacity	154

Estimates of Existing Total Phosphorus Loads	155
Load and Wasteload Allocations	155
Margin of Safety	158
Background	158
Reserve	158
5.3 Temperature TMDLs	159
In-Stream Water Quality Targets.....	159
Design Conditions	160
Target Selection	161
Surrogate Water Temperature Targets.....	168
Heat Loading Capacity	170
Estimates of Existing Heat Loading	170
Heat Load Allocation	177
Margin of Safety	188
Seasonal Variation/Critical Conditions	189
Background	189
Reserve	190
5.4 Sediment TMDLs	190
In-Stream Water Quality Targets for Sediment.....	190
Design Conditions	190
Target Selection	197
Flow Data and Flow Estimation	198
TSS and Bedload Data.....	203
Estimates of Existing Sediment Loads	204
Estimates of Background Sediment Loading	206
Sediment Load Capacity	207
Excess Loading.....	211
Margin of Safety	216
Seasonal Variation	216
Sediment Load Allocations	216
5.5 Implementation Strategy	225
Temperature	226
Sediment.....	227
Bacteria.....	230
Nutrients/DO.....	231
Approach	231
Reasonable Assurance.....	231
Time Frame.....	232
Participating Parties	232
Monitoring Strategy	233
5.6 Summary and Conclusions	235
References	239
Glossary	253

List of Tables

Table A. Water quality limited water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin.....	xxiv
Table B. Streams and pollutants for which TMDLs were developed.	xxix
Table 1. SF CWR Subbasin watersheds, water bodies, and acreages.	4
Table 2. Summary of climatic data for various stations in and around the SF CWR Subbasin.	9
Table 3. SF CWR Subbasin landform group characteristics.	17
Table 4. Watershed condition indicators.	18
Table 5. SF CWR temperatures, 1991-1993 (USFS 1999).	28
Table 6. Acreages of the SF CWR Subbasin land management groups.	31
Table 7. Population trends in Idaho County.	32
Table 8. Sawlog volume sold from SF CWR Subbasin.	35
Table 9. Percent land use in Threemile and Butcher Creeks.	37
Table 10. Water quality limited water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin.	40
Table 11. Sources of water quality data.	46
Table 12. Salmon, trout, and char species present in the SF CWR Subbasin.	48
Table 13. Other fish species known to occur in the SF CWR Subbasin.....	48
Table 14. WBAG version 1996 results for 303(d) listed water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin.	50
Table 15. WBAG version 2002 assessment of the 303(d) listed wadeable streams in the SF CWR Subbasin.....	51
Table 16. USGS and Storet Stations in the SF CWR Subbasin.	54

Table 17. Flow data (cubic feet per second) for the SF CWR near Grangeville (#13338000), 1910-1963.	55
Table 18. Flow data (cubic feet per second) for the SF CWR near Elk City (#13337500), 1944-1974.	56
Table 19. Flow data (cubic feet per second) for the SF CWR at Stites (#13338500), 1910-1912, 1964-1998.	57
Table 20. Mean monthly flows (cubic feet per second) for the SF CWR at Elk City and Stites, and for Lapwai Creek at Lapwai.....	57
Table 21. Magnitude and frequency of instantaneous peak flow at gaging stations in SF CWR Subbasin.....	58
Table 22. SF CWR instantaneous peak discharges (cubic feet per second) during major flood events.	58
Table 23. Monitored flows in Threemile Creek from February 22, 2000, to February 6, 2001.....	76
Table 24. Ortho-phosphorus concentrations on Threemile Creek (February 22, 2000, to February 6, 2001).	85
Table 25. Total nitrogen data summaries for Threemile Creek (February 22, 2000 to February 6, 2001).	87
Table 26. Total phosphorus, nitrate-nitrogen, and bacteria for all stations and dates along Threemile Creek.	90
Table 27. Range and median of nutrients in the Clearwater aquifer measured from 1991 through 1993 (Crockett 1995).	91
Table 28. NPDES permitted point sources in the SF CWR Subbasin.	98
Table 29. Summary of sample results for suction dredges larger than 5 inches (USFS 1980a; USFS 2000).	103
Table 30. Turbidity and TSS data for 8 inch section dredges (USFS 1980a; DEQ 2000).	104
Table 31. Land use in each SF CWR Subbasin WBID units.	106

Table 32. Sediment loads from nonpoint sources for each of the water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin.	111
Table 33. Road data for the SF CWR Subbasin.	119
Table 34. <i>E. coli</i> load capacities for Threemile Creek.	146
Table 35. Average monthly flow, <i>E. coli</i> concentration, and loading in Threemile Creek.	147
Table 36. <i>E. coli</i> nonpoint source allocations and wasteload allocations for Threemile Creek.	150
Table 37. Total phosphorus (TP) load capacities for Threemile Creek.....	155
Table 38. Average monthly flow, total phosphorus (TP) concentration, and loading in Threemile Creek.	156
Table 39. Total phosphorus (TP) load allocations and wasteload allocations for Threemile Creek.....	157
Table 40. Applicable water temperature criteria.....	159
Table 41. Time periods of salmonid spawning and incubation in the SF CWR Subbasin.	162
Table 42. Salmonid species distribution in the SF CWR Subbasin.	163
Table 43. Point sources that may affect stream temperature.....	177
Table 44. Nonpoint source shade increase summary.....	183
Table 45. Elk City wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) maximum daily effluent temperatures (°C) ^a that would not increase temperatures in Elk Creek by more than 0.3 °C between June 1 and September 30 when federal bull trout criteria apply.....	186
Table 46. Grangeville wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) maximum daily effluent temperatures (°C) ^a which would not increase temperatures in Threemile Creek by more than 0.3 °C between April 1 and May 31 when the salmonid spawning criteria is applicable.....	186

Table 47. Grangeville wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) maximum daily effluent temperature (°C) that would not increase Threemile Creek temperature more than 0.3 °C between July 15 and September 15 when coldwater aquatic life temperature criteria apply.....	187
Table 48. Temperature wasteload allocations for wastewater treatment plants.	187
Table 49. Threemile Creek loading calculations.	193
Table 50. Butcher Creek loading calculations.....	194
Table 51. Stites USGS station loading calculations.....	195
Table 52. Harpster site loading calculations.	196
Table 53. Sediment loads from point sources in the SF CWR Subbasin.	204
Table 54. Estimated cumulative sediment loads from nonpoint sources in the SF CWR Subbasin.^a	206
Table 55. Total suspended solids (TSS)-based load capacities for water bodies in the lower SF CWR Subbasin.	208
Table 56. Total sediment loading capacity of water bodies in the upper SF CWR Subbasin.	212
Table 57. Total suspended solids (TSS) excess loading for water bodies in the lower SF CWR Subbasin.	212
Table 58. Sediment wasteload allocations for the SF CWR Subbasin.	220
Table 59. Sediment load allocations for nonpoint sources in the SF CWR Subbasin.^a	224
Table 60. Sediment excess loads by management responsibility in the SF CWR Subbasin.	227
Table 61. Sediment load targets by data type in the SF CWR Subbasin.....	234
Table 62. Streams and pollutants for which TMDLs were developed.	237

List of Figures

Figure A. The South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin in North-Central Idaho	xxiv
Figure 1. The South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin in North-Central Idaho ...	4
Figure 2. Water Bodies and Water Body Numbers in the SF CWR Subbasin	7
Figure 3. Climatic Stations and Precipitation Zones in the SF CWR Subbasin .	8
Figure 4. Monthly Percent of Annual Flow	11
Figure 5. Geology of the SF CWR Subbasin	12
Figure 6. Habitat Type Groups of the SF CWR Subbasin	13
Figure 7. Aquatic Landtype Associations of the SF CWR Subbasin	13
Figure 8. Major Land Managers of the SF CWR Subbasin.....	31
Figure 9. Water Quality Limited Water Bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin	39
Figure 10. Locations of BURP Sites Throughout the SF CWR Subbasin	49
Figure 11. Recent Annual Maximum Weekly Maximum Temperature (MWMT) (°F) Temperature Statistic Values Observed in the SF CWR Subbasin	59
Figure 12. Maximum Weekly Maximum Temperatures Measured along the SF CWR Main Stem in 2000.....	60
Figure 13. SF CWR Temperatures Derived from Instream Monitors and Remote Sensed Thermal Infrared Imaging (TIR a.k.a. FLIR) for August 3, 2000	61
Figure 14. Observed Diurnal Temperatures in the Main Stem SF CWR on August 3, 2000	62
Figure 15. Maximum Weekly Mean Temperatures Measured along Red River in 2000	63
Figure 16. Observed Diurnal Temperatures in Red River on August 3, 2000 ..	63

Figure 17. Measured Maximum Weekly Mean Temperature (°F) in the American River System in 2000	64
Figure 18. Diurnal Temperatures Measured in Big Elk Creek and the American River (mouth) on August 3, 2000	65
Figure 19. Diurnal Temperatures Measured in Little Elk Creek and the American River (mouth) on August 3, 2000.....	65
Figure 20. Maximum Weekly Mean Temperatures Measured in Threemile Creek in 2000.....	66
Figure 21. Diurnal Temperature Measured in Threemile Creek on August 3, 2000.....	67
Figure 22. Seasonal Variations in Daily Maximum Temperatures in the SF CWR (Summer 2000).....	67
Figure 23. Seasonal Variations in Daily Maximum Temperatures in Threemile Creek (Summer 2000)	68
Figure 24. Seasonal Variations in Daily Maximum Temperatures in the Red River (Summer 2000)	68
Figure 25. Total Suspended Solids Excess Loads for Stites, Threemile Creek, and Butcher Creek	71
Figure 26. Monitoring Sites on Threemile Creek.....	74
Figure 27. Stream Flow at Four Monitoring Points on Threemile Creek	75
Figure 28. Flows Monitored in Butcher Creek	76
Figure 29. Measured Monthly Temperature and Precipitation vs. 40 Year Monthly Averages for Temperature and Precipitation.....	77
Figure 30. <i>E. coli</i> Bacteria Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek	78
Figure 31. <i>E. coli</i> Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	79
Figure 32. Dissolved Oxygen Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek	80

Figure 33. Dissolved Oxygen Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	81
Figure 34. Total Ammonia Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek.....	82
Figure 35. Total Ammonia Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	82
Figure 36. pH Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek.....	83
Figure 37. pH Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	83
Figure 38. Ortho-phosphorus Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek.....	86
Figure 39. Ortho-Phosphorus Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	86
Figure 40. Total Nitrogen Monitoring Results for Threemile Creek	88
Figure 41. Total Nitrogen Monitoring Results for Butcher Creek.....	89
Figure 42. Locations of NPDES Permitted Sites in the SF CWR Subbasin	99
Figure 43. Land Use Distribution in the SF CWR Subbasin	109
Figure 44. Sediment Production by Water Body in the SF CWR Subbasin....	118
Figure 45. Annual Sediment Production per Square Mile in the SF CWR Subbasin	118
Figure 46. Fish TAG Assessment of Water Bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin with Significant Sediment Problems	122
Figure 47. Seasonal Variation in Maximum Water Temperature at Various Locations along the SF CWR in 2000	171
Figure 48. Diurnal Temperatures Measured Big Elk Creek and the American River (mouth) on August 3, 2000	172
Figure 49. Current Percent Canopy Closure Determined by Aerial Photographic Interpretation of the SF CWR Subbasin	173
Figure 50. Current Canopy Closure of Threemile and Butcher Creeks	173
Figure 51. Current Canopy Closure of Big Elk and Little Elk Creeks	174

Figure 52. Big Elk Creek Current Effective Shade, Lower Reaches	174
Figure 53. Little Elk Creek Current Effective Shade, Lower Reaches	175
Figure 54. Threemile Creek Current Effective Shade.....	175
Figure 55. South Fork Clearwater River Current Effective Shade	176
Figure 56. Butcher Creek Current Effective Shade	176
Figure 57. Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE)-Based Target Percent Canopy Closure for the SF CWR Subbasin	179
Figure 58. Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE)-Based Target Percent Canopy Closure for the Threemile/Butcher Creeks Area	179
Figure 59. Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE)-Based Target Percent Canopy Closure for the Big and Little Elk Creeks Area	180
Figure 60. Current and System Potential Effective Shade Conditions for the SF CWR	180
Figure 61. Current and System Potential Effective Shade Conditions for Big Elk Creek	181
Figure 62. Current and System Potential Effective Shade Conditions for Little Elk Creek	181
Figure 63. Current and System Potential Effective Shade Conditions for Threemile Creek	182
Figure 64. Current and System Potential Effective Shade Conditions for Butcher Creek	182
Figure 65. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Flow Record from Stites	199
Figure 66. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Flow Data for Lapwai Creek.....	200
Figure 67. Derived 10-Year Flow for Threemile Creek	202
Figure 68. Derived 10-Year Flow for Butcher Creek.....	202
Figure 69. Derived 10-Year Flow for the Harpster Site on the SF CWR.....	203
Figure 70. Average Daily Total Suspended Solids (TSS) Load Capacities for Stites Site on the SF CWR, Threemile Creek, and Butcher Creek	210

Figure 71. Excess Sediment Loading for Threemile Creek	213
Figure 72. Excess Sediment Loading for Butcher Creek.....	214
Figure 73. Excess Sediment Loading at Stites	215

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Memorandum of Agreement

Appendix B. Federal Bull Trout Criteria

Appendix C. Assessment Units for the South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin TMDLs

Appendix D. Fisheries Resources

Appendix E. Agricultural Chemicals

Appendix F. System Potential Vegetation Methods and Results

Appendix G. The Cumulative Watershed Effects Temperature Model Applied to the South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin

Appendix H. U.S. Forest Service Vegetation Response Unit and Habitat Type Group Descriptions

Appendix I. Overview of Stream Heating Processes

Appendix J. Stream and River Temperature Data

Appendix K. Summary of Stream Habitat Data

Appendix L. South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin Sediment Budget

Appendix M. Total Suspended Solids and Bedload Data

Appendix N. Reference Watersheds

Appendix O. Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Effluent Temperature and Heat Loading Analysis

Appendix P. Lucas Lake, Beneficial Use Assessment and Reconnaissance Metals Monitoring

Appendix Q. Unit Conversion Chart

Appendix R. Public Comment Distribution List

Appendix S. Responses to Public Comments

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols

303(d)	Refers to section 303 subsection (d) of the Clean Water Act, or a list of impaired water bodies required by this section	CFR	Code of Federal Regulations (refers to citations in the federal administrative rules)
μ	micro, one-one thousandth	cfs	cubic feet per second
§	Section (usually a section of federal or state rules or statutes)	cfu	colony forming units
ACOE	Army Corps of Engineers	cm	centimeters
ALTA	aquatic landtype association	CRP	Cropping Reserve Program
ave.	average	CWA	Clean Water Act
BA	biological assessment	CWAL	cold water aquatic life
BAG	Basin Advisory Group	CWE	cumulative watershed effects
BLM	United States Bureau of Land Management	DEQ	Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
BMP	best management practice	DO	dissolved oxygen
BOD	biological oxygen demand	DRG	digital Raster graphic
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration	ECA	equivalent clearcut acres
Btu	British thermal unit	EMAP	Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program
BURP	Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Program	EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentive Program
C	Celsius	ESA	Endangered Species Act
CAFO	confined animal feeding operation	ESU	ecologically significant unit
CFI	Clearwater Forest Industries	F	Fahrenheit
		Fish TAG	Fisheries Technical Advisory Group
		FLIR	forward-looking infra-red
		FPA	Idaho Forest Practices Act

FSA	Farm Services Administration	km²	square kilometer
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	LA	load allocation
GIS	Geographical Information Systems	LFG	landform group
HALT	habitat alteration	LC	load capacity
HI	DEQ's Habitat Index	m	meter
HTG	habitat type groups	m³	cubic meter
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code	M&E	monitoring and evaluation
ICBEMP	Interior Columbia Basin Environmental Management Program	mi	mile
IDA	Idaho Department of Agriculture	mi²	square miles
IDAPA	Refers to citations of Idaho administrative rules	MBI	macroinvertebrate biotic index
IDC	Idaho Department of Commerce	MGD	million gallons per day
IDHW	Idaho Department of Health and Welfare	mg/L	milligrams per liter
ITD	Idaho Transportation Dept.	mm	millimeter
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	MMBF	million board feet
IDL	Idaho Department of Lands	MOS	margin of safety
IDWR	Idaho Department of Water Resources	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
INFISH	Federal Inland Native Fish Strategy	MWMT	maximum weekly maximum temperature
km	kilometer	N	nitrogen
		n.a.	not applicable
		NA	not assessed
		NB	natural background
		nd	no data (data not available)

NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act	QALT	flow alteration
NEZSED	Nez Perce National Forest sediment model	QC	quality control
NFS	not fully supporting	RFI	DEQ's river fish index
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service	RHCA	riparian habitat conservation area
NO2	nitric oxide	RM	river mile
NO3	nitrous oxide	RMI	DEQ's river macroinvertebrate index
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System	RUSLE	revised universal soil loss equation
NPNF	Nez Perce National Forest	SBA	subbasin assessment
NPT	Nez Perce Tribe	SCR	secondary contact recreation
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service	SF CWR	South Fork Clearwater River
NTU	nephelometric turbidity unit	SFI	DEQ's stream fish index
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory	SHI	DEQ's stream habitat index
ORW	Outstanding Resource Water	SMI	DEQ's stream macroinvertebrate index
P	phosphorus	SS	salmonid spawning
PACFISH	The federal Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy	SSOC	stream segment of concern
PCB	polychloro bi-phenols	SSURGO	Soil Survey Geographic Database
PCR	primary contact recreation	STATSGO	State Soil Geographic Database
PFC	proper functioning condition	STP	sewage treatment plant
ppm	part(s) per million	TAG	technical advisory group
QA	quality assurance	TIN	total inorganic nitrogen

TIR	thermal infra-red	WEPP	Watershed Erosion Prediction Project sediment model
TKN	total Kjeldahl nitrogen	WLA	wasteload allocation
TMDL	total maximum daily load	WQS	water quality standard(s)
TN	total nitrogen	WWTP	waste water treatment plant
TP	total phosphorus		
TSS	total suspended solids		
t/y	tons per year		
U.S.	United States		
U.S.C.	United States Code		
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture		
USDI	United States Department of the Interior		
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency		
USFS	United States Forest Service		
USGS	United States Geological Survey		
VRU	vegetative response units		
WAG	Watershed Advisory Group		
WBAG	<i>Water Body Assessment Guidance</i>		
WB	water body		
WBID	water body identification number		

Executive Summary

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that states and tribes restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. States and tribes, pursuant to Section 303 of the CWA, are to adopt water quality standards (WQS) necessary to protect fish, shellfish, and wildlife while providing for recreation in and on the waters whenever possible. Section 303(d) of the CWA establishes requirements for states and eligible tribes to identify and prioritize water bodies that are water quality limited (i.e., water bodies that do not meet water quality standards). States and tribes must periodically publish a priority list of impaired waters, currently every two years. For waters identified on this list, states and tribes must develop a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the pollutants, set at a level to achieve WQS. This document addresses the water bodies in the South Fork Clearwater River (SF CWR) Subbasin that have been placed on what has come to be known as the "303(d) list." This document was prepared collaboratively under a Memorandum of Agreement by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

This subbasin assessment and TMDLs have been developed to comply with Idaho's WQS and TMDL schedule. The first part of this document, the subbasin assessment, is an important first step in leading to the TMDL. This assessment describes the physical, biological, and cultural setting; water quality status; pollutant sources; and recent pollution control actions in the SF CWR Subbasin located in north-central Idaho. The starting point for the assessment was Idaho's 1998 303(d) list of water quality limited water bodies. Eighteen stream segments and one lake in the SF CWR Subbasin were included on this list. The subbasin assessment portion of this document examines the current status of 303(d) listed waters. It defines the extent of impairment and causes of water quality limitation throughout the subbasin. The loading analysis, or TMDL, portion of the document quantifies pollutant sources and allocates responsibility for load reductions needed to return listed waters to a condition of meeting WQS.

Subbasin Assessment at a Glance

The SF CWR Subbasin is entirely within Idaho County, with the county seat at Grangeville, Idaho, and partially on the Nez Perce Reservation (Figure A). Total maximum daily loads were completed in 2000 for the six stream segments in the Cottonwood Creek watershed within the SF CWR Subbasin. This document addresses the remaining 12 listed stream segments and Lucas Lake. Their extent, beneficial uses, and suspected pollutants are shown in Table A. However, at the completion of the assessment of temperature impairment to water quality, it was concluded that many unlisted stream segments throughout the subbasin need heat load reductions to meet WQS. Heat load reductions in terms of stream shading increases were established for stream segments throughout the subbasin.

A new, comprehensive system of water quality accounting is being established by DEQ and USEPA which uses water quality "assessment units" (AUs). The correlation between AUs and the water bodies assessed in this report is presented in Appendix C.

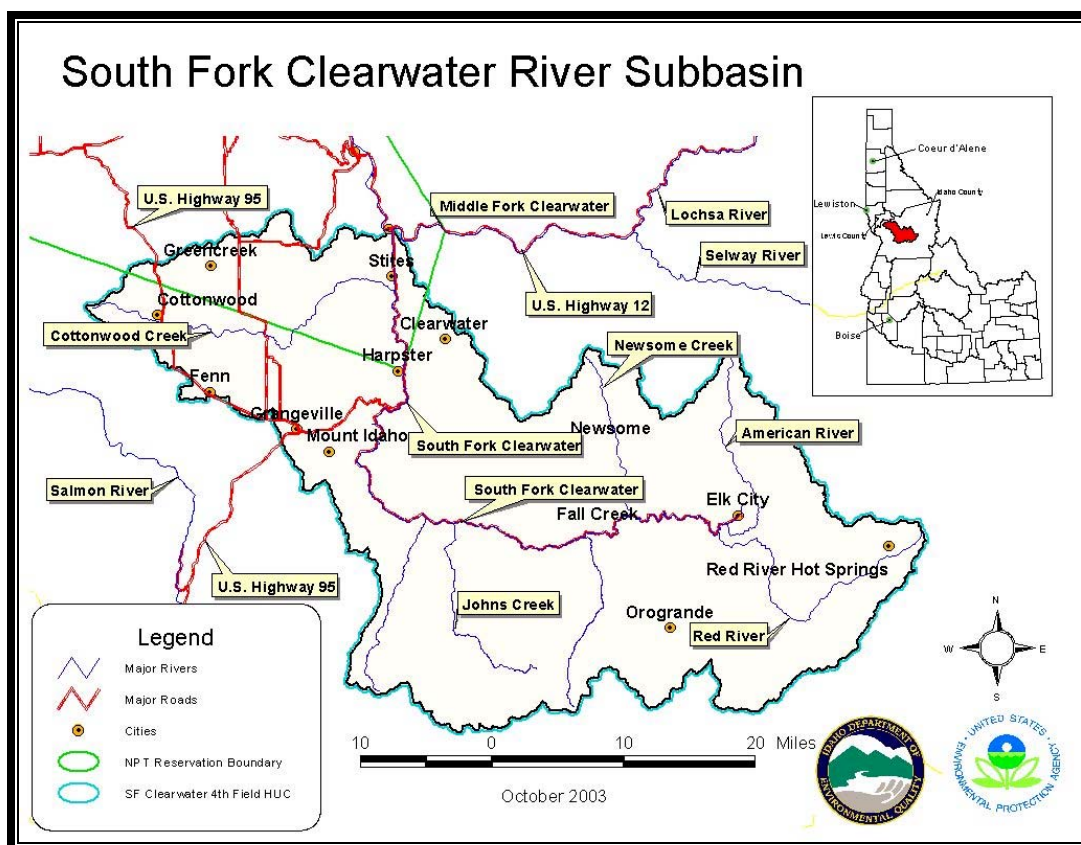


Figure A. The South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin in North-Central Idaho

Table A. Water quality limited water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin.

Stream Name	Water Body Identification Numbers ^a	Boundaries (1998 303(d) list) ^b	Beneficial Uses ^c	303(d) Listed Pollutant ^d	TMDLs Completed
South Fork Clearwater River	1, 12, 22, 30, 36	Red River to Clearwater River	CW/SS(d) PCR(d) SRW (d)	Halt, Sed, Temp	Sed, Temp
Three mile Creek	10	Headwaters to SF CWR	CW/SS(d) SCR(d)	Bac, DO, Qalt, Halt, NH ₃ , Nut, Sed, Temp	Bac, DO, Nut, Sed, Temp
Butcher Creek	11	Headwaters to SF CWR	CW/SS(d) SCR(d)	Bac, DO, Qalt, Halt, Sed, Temp	Sed, Temp
Dawson Creek	38	Headwaters to Red River	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Little Elk Creek	57	Headwaters to Elk Creek	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Temp	Temp
Big Elk	58	Headwaters	CW/SS(e)	Temp	Temp

Stream Name	Water Body Identification Numbers^a	Boundaries (1998 303(d) list)^b	Beneficial Uses^c	303(d) Listed Pollutant^d	TMDLs Completed
Creek		to Elk Creek	PCR/SCR(e)		
Buffalo Gulch	59	Headwaters to American River	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
New-some Creek	62	Beaver Creek to SF CWR	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Nugget Creek	64	Headwaters to Newsome Creek	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Beaver Creek	65	Headwaters to Newsome Creek	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Sing Lee Creek	73	Headwaters to Newsome Creek	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Cougar Creek	79	Headwaters to SF CWR	CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	Temp
Lucas Lake			CW/SS(e) PCR/SCR(e)	Sed	
58 Other Water Bodies ^e					Temp

^a A new accounting system for water quality tracking is being setup using water quality “assessment units” (AUs). A given water body may contain one or more AUs. The correlation between water bodies assessed in this document and AUs may be found in Appendix C.

^b Refers to a list created in 1998 of water bodies in Idaho that did not fully support at least one beneficial use. This list is required under section 303 subsection “d” of the Clean Water Act. This list may change in the future.

^c CW = Cold Water, SS = Salmonid Spawning, PCR = Primary Contact Recreation, SCR = Secondary Contact Recreation, SWR= Special Resource Water, (d) = designated beneficial use, (e) = existing beneficial use

^d Bac = bacteria, DO = dissolved oxygen, Qalt = flow alteration, Halt = habitat alteration, NH₃ = ammonia, Nut = nutrients, Sed = sediment, Temp = temperature

^e Temperature TMDLs were written for the 58 other water bodies in the SF CWR Subbasin, excepting those water bodies covered by the Cottonwood Creek TMDL.

Pollutant analyses were conducted in four distinct groupings: subbasin-wide analyses for temperature (heat loading); subbasin-wide analyses for sediment; Threemile and Butcher Creeks for bacteria, nutrients, dissolved oxygen, and ammonia; and Lucas Lake for sediment.

Subbasin-wide temperature analyses were conducted in light of an extensive database indicating that no stream in the SF CWR Subbasin, not even ones in relatively pristine condition, meets the Idaho numeric temperature criteria for salmonid spawning. However, the Idaho WQS recognize that stream temperatures may naturally exceed numeric criteria and that pollution control measures should only address the human-caused increases in

temperature. The non-point temperature assessments assumed that the human-caused effects were increased solar insolation, primarily a result of reduced streamside vegetation and, secondarily a result of increased stream width. Shading and stream width analyses were conducted on all perennial streams in the subbasin. The human-caused stream temperature increase was quantified in terms of the percent decrease in stream shade and increase in stream width. Targets were set based on best estimates of natural conditions for stream shade and stream width. It was recognized that minor amounts of human-caused heat loading occur, such as from hatchery facilities or old mining sites, but allocations were limited to the major source of increased heat loading, reduced stream shading and increased stream width. Point source temperature loadings were calculated based on temperatures and flows, and were generally very low except at the Grangeville wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Targets for all WWTPs were set to limit temperature increases in receiving waters to less than 0.3°C (0.5°F) above the temperature criteria, as per the WQS and USEPA temperature guidance (USEPA 2003).

Subbasin-wide sediment analyses were based on a limited stream turbidity and total suspended solids (TSS) data set from four locations in the lower subbasin and a sediment delivery budget to streams from various sources. The sediment budget was developed using estimates from different models and data sets from the various sediment sources throughout the subbasin, as follows: NEZSED erosion model estimates of sediment from federally-managed timber land; RUSLE erosion model estimates of sediment from agricultural and range land; a stream bank erosion model estimate of in-stream erosion; WEPP erosion model estimates of sediment from county roads; a Nez Perce National Forest inventory of mass failures extrapolated to include the complete subbasin; and an estimate based on average annual rock crush of gravel from State Highway 14 reaching the river. Point sources of sediment in the subbasin (municipal WWTPs, suction dredges, construction and industrial stormwater runoff) were found to be insignificant in relation to the nonpoint sources.

Turbidity data were compared directly to the state WQS with loadings calculated using turbidity to TSS relationships. Sediment targets and allocations in the lower basin were set to meet the state turbidity criteria. Sediment targets for the upper basin, where no turbidity data were available, were set based on the percent load reduction needed at the mouth of the SF CWR, the Stites bridge control location. It was recognized that minor amounts of human-caused sediment loading occurs, such as from hatchery facilities or old mining sites, but allocations were limited to the major sources identified in the sediment budget. Point source allocations were established at required technology based levels, or at levels in existing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.

Threemile and Butcher Creeks are 303(d) listed for several other pollutants in addition to sediment and temperature. They were both also evaluated for nutrients, dissolved oxygen, bacteria, and ammonia. Threemile Creek is particularly impacted because it receives effluent from the Grangeville WWTP, which at times makes up more than 50% of the stream flow. Data for pollutants were collected near the mouth of Butcher Creek and at four locations on Threemile Creek. Bacteria, dissolved oxygen, and ammonia data were compared to the state WQS. Nutrient levels were compared to both USEPA guidelines and the state's narrative WQS to determine impairment. In the case of Threemile Creek, where water quality

impairment was identified, the target was set for phosphorus based on the USEPA guidelines and local monitoring results. These targets, and the seasonality of their application, may require adjustments in the future as additional data and information are collected. The phosphorus TMDL is expected to result in compliance with the numeric dissolved oxygen standard as well as the narrative nutrient criteria. A bacteria TMDL was also established for Threemile Creek to address the seasonally high levels of *E. coli*.

Lucas Lake, near Elk City, is an old “glory hole” about 2 acres in size from the mining days. It was 303(d) listed because it was identified in the Idaho 1988 *Water Quality Status Report and Nonpoint Source Assessment* (DEQ 1989) as not supporting one or more beneficial uses due to sediment siltation. Turbidity and metals samples were collected for the lake and compared against the state WQS. No impairment was identified.

Key Findings

The SF CWR subbasin assessment and TMDLs have been written with input from a local Watershed Advisory Group consisting of 16 members representing a wide range of interests and land managers. This group met monthly over the course of the project to review progress and provide input. A Fisheries Technical Advisory Group of professionals knowledgeable of the fisheries resources in the subbasin met several times and provided detailed information about the presence and condition of salmonid species in the subbasin.

As a result of the subbasin assessment, temperature TMDLs were written for all 74 water bodies in the part of the subbasin covered by this document; sediment TMDLs were written for the main stem SF CWR, Butcher Creek, and Threemile Creek; and nutrient and bacteria TMDLs were written for Threemile Creek. It is expected that these TMDLs will improve conditions throughout the subbasin for all aquatic species, including threatened and endangered fish species such as bull trout, spring chinook salmon, and steelhead.

Water temperatures are elevated above WQS at all monitoring locations throughout the subbasin. Shading of the water surface has been reduced by logging, roading, mining, grazing, and agricultural activities near the streams and rivers. To a lesser degree, stream channel configurations have been altered by the same human activities. Water channels that have been made wider and shallower, with less vegetative shading, are being heated by solar insolation. The degree to which shade has been reduced and channels altered was assessed on a stream reach by stream reach basis. Current stream shading was assessed using aerial photograph interpretation and other analytical techniques. Potential shade in forested areas was assumed to be 90%. Channel widths in forested areas were assumed to have been little altered in relation to the size of coniferous trees and their ability to provide shade. Potential shade in non-forested areas was calculated from the size and density of an expected natural vegetation and an expected natural channel width. Targets were set to restore stream shading and stream channel morphology to conditions representing minimal human impact.

Whereas stream heat load capacity can be described in terms of joules per day, and some discussion of heat loading in relation to stream shade and channel width is included in this document, loading for temperature is presented in terms of stream shade and stream width.

The load capacity of a given stream reach is set at the heat loading that would occur if the reach were in a relatively undisturbed condition in terms of the channel morphology and streamside vegetation. In the forested part of the subbasin, 3,640 stream reaches were evaluated, of which 54% need various percentage increases of stream canopy closure. An ArcView shapefile is included with the TMDL so users can locate stream reaches and identify whether or not a shade increase is needed, and how much. For the non-forested streams and rivers, more variable current conditions led to the need to have shade and stream width targets defined on a more site-specific basis. Any need for increased shade and/or stream width reduction must be calculated on the ground using a set of graphs which require input of wetted stream width, aspect of the stream, and one of twelve expected natural vegetation categories.

Point source contributions to water temperature increases are minor throughout the subbasin except for the effects of the effluent from the Grangeville WWTP on Threemile Creek. Allocations are established for all WWTPs such that they will not increase stream temperature more than 0.3°C (0.5°F) above established temperature criteria per IDAPA 58.01.02.401.03.a.v, and USEPA regional temperature guidance (USEPA 2003).

Sediment loadings to waters of the SF CWR Subbasin fall into two relatively distinct categories: sediment loadings from agricultural and grazing areas on the order of 10-30 times natural background (per water body) compared to sediment loadings from forested areas no greater than twice natural background. For Threemile and Butcher Creeks which are the primary agricultural areas in the subbasin, TSS based on the turbidity WQS need to be reduced 71% and 46%, respectively, to meet the state WQS. At Stites on the main stem SF CWR, with dilution from the forested part of the watershed, TSS loading needs to be reduced by 25%. At the Harpster control location, which is above the majority of agricultural and grazing areas, turbidity meets the WQS.

Water quality in the upper basin was determined to be degraded by coarse sediment, primarily sand-sized material, as it affects salmonid spawning. The problem is more-or-less basin-wide wherever human activities have occurred. In order to meet water quality objectives, sediment load reduction allocations of 25% were set for the Harpster control location as well as three other upstream control locations (above Johns Creek, above Tenmile Creek, and above Crooked River) on the main stem SF CWR. Control locations were set on the main stem with the goal of directing land managers to reduce sediment from appropriate locations throughout the upper basin. For example, to meet the load allocated to the main South Fork Clearwater River at Harpster reductions may occur anywhere in the watershed above Harpster. The 25% load reduction target was selected as consistent with the load reduction required at the Stites location at the mouth of the main stem.

Point sources of sediment loading include five municipal WWTPs, suction dredge mining operations, and construction and industrial stormwater runoff. All of these sources are very minor in comparison to loading from human-caused nonpoint source runoff. Allocations for these facilities are based on meeting turbidity and treatment requirements in Idaho WQS, and technology based limits for WWTPs.

Bacteria levels in Threemile Creek substantially exceed the *E. coli* criteria in Idaho WQS. Limited data are available to assess the source of bacteria loading, but it is believed that livestock grazing in and around the creek is the most significant source. Other potential sources include stormwater runoff and leaking sewer lines in Grangeville, failed septic systems, and waterfowl and other wildlife. A general load reduction of 82% - 93% has been set for all nonpoint sources. The Grangeville WWTP is a known point source, but due to its disinfection facilities, it contributes less than allowed by the WQS and its NPDES permit. It received an allocation equal to the WQS, with no required load reduction.

Nutrient levels in Threemile Creek substantially exceed USEPA's regional guidance for both nitrogen and phosphorus. The majority of the nutrients are contained in the effluent from the WWTP; however, a considerable portion is also from nonpoint sources. Required load reductions are developed for phosphorus as the limiting nutrient for both the WWTP and non-point sources. Since dissolved oxygen (DO) and nutrient levels are linked, the state WQS of 6 mg/L of DO is set as a target for DO. In order to attain the targets, phosphorus load reductions were set at 32% from the headwaters to the WWTP, 32% from the WWTP outfall to the Nez Perce Reservation boundary, and 0% from the reservation boundary to the mouth. The WWTP received a 97% phosphorus load reduction.

Table B. Streams and pollutants for which TMDLs were developed.

Stream	Pollutant(s)
South Fork Clearwater River	Sediment, Temperature
Threemile Creek	Bacteria, Nutrients, DO, Sediment, Temperature
Butcher Creek	Sediment, Temperature
Dawson Creek	Temperature
Little Elk Creek	Temperature
Big Elk Creek	Temperature
Buffalo Gulch	Temperature
Newsome Creek	Temperature
Beaver Creek	Temperature
Nugget Creek	Temperature
Sing Lee Creek	Temperature
Cougar Creek	Temperature
58 Other Water Bodies	Temperature

Timeframe.

Development of the implementation plan has already begun. The plan is expected to be completed in time to submit for 319 funding in 2004/2005. Wasteload allocations will be incorporated into NPDES permits when they are reissued or reopened. The Grangeville permit is expected to be reissued within the next 1-2 years, and the recently reissued permits

for Kooskia, Stites, Elk City and Red River Ranger Station will need to be re-opened to incorporate revised limits.

Implementation of nonpoint source controls has already begun, but is expected to proceed in earnest once the implementation plan is complete and funds are available. A majority of the sources of temperature and sediment loading are nonpoint in origin, and realistically it may take many years if not decades to fully achieve the goals of the TMDL. Certain improvements such as controlling temperature and nutrients from the Grangeville treatment facility or controlling nonpoint bacteria sources are likely to occur within a few years. In order to improve stream temperature, restored riparian communities and stream channels are needed. In smaller streams and watersheds, for example, the exclosure on Big Elk Creek, significant improvement may be seen in several years. It is likely to take decades to see such improvement throughout the watershed given the large scale of needed improvements and the time needed for riparian vegetation to grow to maturity.